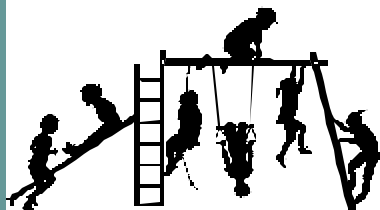


CHILDREN'S JUSTICE ACT RESEARCH SUMMARY

CHILDREN'S JUSTICE ACT TASK FORCE

Why a Survey?



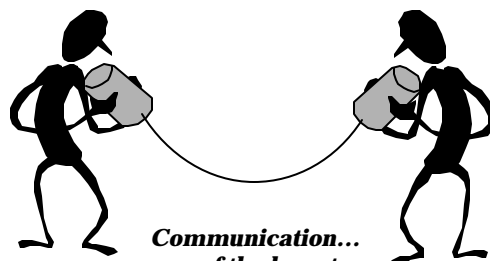
The mission of the CJA Task Force is ***“to reduce child sexual abuse by improving the system’s response to child maltreatment.”*** One of the goals of the Task Force is to determine where we are today in effectively fulfilling our mission. To evaluate that progress, the Task Force chose to conduct a survey of stakeholders involved in responding to child sexual abuse.

The CJA Task Force is tasked with recommend-

ing improvements to the system of addressing child sexual abuse and exploitation. Further, we are committed to increasing the coordination and communication among agencies and disciplines throughout the state and to advocate for the necessary changes to improve the service system provided to victims of sexual abuse.

Methodology

During the period September 16 - October 3, 2003, eighty (n=80) individuals involved in various aspects of responding to children who have been sexually abused, were interviewed by telephone by the professional interviewing staff at Dittman Research Corporation. Their views and opinions are presented here, confidentially, in aggregate form.



**Communication...
one of the keys to
success**

Many suggestions come forward...

Many respondents have excellent suggestions and comments about the system here in Alaska:

“Adequately staff and fund offices already working in those areas. Provide for frequent cross-training among disciplines. We should increase services available in rural areas — on site.”

“More social workers. They are definitely needed in all areas.”

“More legal training on how to convey to a jury why a victim does as he does and says what he says. Better understand of everyone’s role and how they work together.”

“Compared to seven years ago it has improved. But most of our problems are because of turnover — constant turnover and burnout. We need consistency.”

“...for us to improve overall services to children, we need more funding. We are so spread out, and funding needs to be provided if we are to sustain more CACs throughout the state.”

Findings include:

- **The child abuse response system is doing an “adequate” to “poor” job of fulfilling the mission of the Children’s Justice Act.**
- **A need for better coordination among and across all disciplines .**
- **One of the impediments to providing consistent and quality services to victims is understaffing and turnover/burnout of professionals in this field.**
- **Child Advocacy Centers (CACs), where active, have proven to be very successful and effective.**

“Overall, just be much more proactive. What I see is that there is not enough information out there. Resources are limited. Agencies should come together more. We need a blue print for working together. How to coordinate between agencies to streamline cases, and share information so more cases can be prosecuted.”

Training is a priority....

As noted in the table below, each discipline is seeking more training in their general area of expertise, i.e., Administrative in "up-to-date resources," Investigative in "interviewing," etc. Most comments regarding training were in ways to improve direct services to the clients, in ways that would improve the overall delivery of the service.



What type of training would help?

- **Interviewing skills and techniques.**
- **Victim assistance, knowing how to help victims.**
- **Up-to-date resources, cross-training.**
- **Legal issues, court process, what not to do.**
- **Cultural sensitivity; health issues.**
- **Skills in recognizing & responding to problems**

"Team training and multi-disciplinary training so we can help each other better."

"How to work more sensitively toward victims. Having an overall knowledge of the impact on youth, what to do to help mitigate problems they will have later in life."

"How to interview and approach children. Evidence collection techniques. And, how to deal with the kids social needs."

Profession role	Up-to-date Resources	Victim Assistance	Inter-viewing	Legal Issues
Judicial	14%	27%	16%	16%
Administrative	43%	24%	5%	10%
Investigative	23%	14%	32%	5%

Our goals are simple, yet critical that we all start on the same page and work together — as a team to affect positive change.

- Seek methods to **increase and retain staff** to prevent turnover and burnout.
- Identify methods to **improve communication** across disciplines to improve coordination and effectiveness.
- Share **training** opportunities across disciplines.
- Continue to **evaluate** our system of addressing child sexual abuse utilizing sound outcome measures.

CAC Success is worth replicating

It appears the CACs throughout the state are very successful. Of those who have had experience with a CAC, 78% mentioned they have had a "good" or "very good" experience. Although not all professionals involved in addressing child sexual abuse have used CACs (see table to right), those who have used CACs predominantly describe the experience (s) positively (see

Use of CACs

Professional role	Frequently	Occasionally	Seldom	No contact
Judicial	27%	16%	16%	41%
Administrative	48%	5%	24%	24%
Investigative	50%	5%	5%	32%

table below). In addition, CACs have also been found to be an effective tool in responding to cases of child sexual abuse. The survey results suggest that if the CAC model is effectively replicated in communities throughout the state, the overall system of addressing child sexual abuse would show marked improvement.



Percent Good/Very good Experience with CACs



"The mission of the Children's Justice Act State Task Force is to reduce child sexual abuse by improving the system's response to child maltreatment. We believe that the utilization of CACs and multidisciplinary teams is an effective approach to addressing our mission. Therefore, we want to continue to develop this model in Alaska by using funds from this federal CJA grant to provide education, research, multidiscipline cooperation and funding for special projects."

Lisa Nelson, Chair, CJA Task Force

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